11818½ Dorothy St.
L.A. Calif. 90049
May 9 1968

Mr. Arnold Levine
725 E. Kennedy Blvd.
Tampa, Florida 33602

Dear Mr. Levine,

For use in your phone call to Mr. Fred Newcomb (213 783 8037) enclosed find a typed copy of the letter of March 12, 1968 which he received from Harold Weisberg, on DA Garrison's letterhead. This copy was made from handwritten notes I made at Newcomb's home this past Sunday.

This letter was preceded by several letters in which Weisberg asks that pictures of Kerry Thornley be altered. (All the preceding letters are irrelevant to the main point, as they were written on Weisberg's personal letterhead). He and Weisberg had been having a running correspondence on the matter, in which Fred kept trying to put Weisberg off by claiming he didn't understand exactly what it was that Weisberg wanted. The correspondence culminates with this letter which sailed in on DA Garrison's letterhead. Fred then sent Weisberg some pictures.

At the end, Newcomb behaved as if he was getting somewhat jittery and conscience struck , and he has told me he is very sorry that he did not keep a copy of his last letter Weisberg, which accompanied the pictures he finally did end up sending. That letter tells Weisberg he would rather not have anything further to do with this matter.

Recapitulating the Lifton/Newcomb dialogue:he has told me that from the very beginning, he has felt somewhat uneasy about altering a picture of Kerry; for that reason, he will probably go out of his way to tell you what a bad job he did, and that it could not possibly be used at a trial; he will want to assuage his consicience by convincing you of the minimal nature of his persoanl involvement in anything that could possibly be construed to be part of a frame-up; he will tell you that the pictures he sent are terrible, that anybody can see that they are gross alterations, and that they could never possibly be used at a trial; he has done nothing wrong and he has nothing to be ashamed of; if they were so stupid as to use the pictures he sent for any such purpose, he would gladly come to New Orleans and testify as he is the last person in the world who wants to see an innocent man sent to jail.

But couldn't he please keep his involvement down to a minimum until such time?

To break through this argument, I have told Fred that he does not know exactly to what use these pictures are being put during the course of the investigation. Furthermore, I have emphasized that it is Thornley's attorney, Mr. Arnold Levine, who should be the one to decide exactly what use ought to be made of this letter, as it is his job to protect Kerry's rights. In effect, I have tried to say,

without being rude: "You are the commerical artist who did this; let Mr. Levine be the attorney. He doesn't tell you how to do photography; you don't advise him on legal matters."

I have further told him that he, Fred Newcomb, has a responsibility to furnish Thornley's side with an item of information (the word "evidence" would scare the daylights out of him) and let the adversary system, in which he claims to have full faith, run its course. I have said that he must see this as his duty irrespective of which side he may be rooting for because of his personal feelings about the validity of the Warren Report, and/or DA Garrison. In this same vein, I have told him that if Thornley really had committed a crime (perjury or otherwise) connected with the assassination of President Kennedy, this letter wouldn't matter a bit, and could not possibly change matters. I further told him that if this letter tips the scales either way, it will only be because Garrison had nothing in the first place, and won't he feel good having done the right thing.

If the above sounds childish or juvenile, it it because Fred is a brandnewcomer to the group of California "Warren Report critics", and his stomach turns to jelly at the thought of losing or jeopardizing his friendships with this group of people by doing anything to hurt their common hero, Mr. Garrison. For that reason, I have had to approach the matter on my hands and knees, trying not to beg, but prodding his conscience while simultaneously trying to minimize his personal fears.

I just spoke to Fred and told him you would be calling this weekend, and that you would be asking him for a xerox copy of the letter. There is a reluctance, but a willingness to grudgingly bend if enough moral pressure is applied, which I have managed to convince him is the phone call from you.

I suggest that when you call, you approach with the presumption that he has already agreed, and that you are merely calling to chat with him for a few minutes about the matter, and to give him your address. You may have to patiently listen as he runs through some of the same arguments, but I hope there will be no serious problem. Good luck.

Sincerely yours,

David S. Lifton

P.S. As you can well understand, I will heave one big sigh of relief when Fred Newcomb has gone to Xerox machine, created copy, addressed letter, licked stamp and envolope, and deposited in mailbox.